

February 13, 2023

Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Human Services Committee in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

Co-Chairs Senator Lesser and Representative Gilchrist, Ranking Members Senator Seminara and Representative Case, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am Ruth Alcabes and live in West Hartford. I'm a member of Congregation P'nai Or of West Hartford, and my congregation is a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). I am writing in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

I support this bill because many members of the immigrant community, including 58% of undocumented people in Connecticut, are without any form of health insurance to cover mental or physical health care (compared to just 5% of the overall population). In addition, being a member of a marginalized community increases the risk of mental health challenges. Meanwhile, undocumented people pay \$187 million annually in Connecticut taxes, without getting the same services as others in the state.

HUSKY insurance offers true mental health parity, covering mental health on par with physical health. Expanding access to HUSKY by passing HB 6616 will provide critical access to care, including for adolescents and young adults, during the years when major mental health disorders often emerge.

This cost of this expansion would represent only 3% of the state's annual Medicaid budget. Furthermore, much of this cost would be balanced out by savings in expenses for emergency Medicaid and uncompensated care.

I care strongly about this issue because I have seen based on my experiences and those of family members that quality of life, and the ability to contribute to society, relies on access to care for both physical and mental health.

Expanding HUSKY access to all income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, will meaningfully expand access to mental (as well as physical) health care to people who are currently excluded. It is economically sensible as well as the moral and just thing to do. HB 6616 is an important step in this direction. Please advance this bill out of committee in its current form, and then champion it in the full legislature. I look forward to supporting your efforts. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Ruth Alcabes  
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